

VZCZCXYZ0000
OO RUEHWEB

DE RUEHBK #4982/01 2601207
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
O 171207Z SEP 07
FM AMEMBASSY BANGKOK
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 9664

UNCLAS BANGKOK 004982

SIPDIS

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: OTRA AMGT TH

SUBJECT: THAILAND COUNTRY CLEARANCE FOR DEPUTY ASSISTANT
SECRETARY JOHN A. GASTRIGHT, BUREAU OF SOUTH AND CENTRAL

SIPDIS

ASIAN AFFAIRS:

REF: NONE

¶1. Post warmly welcomes and grants country clearance for DAS
JOHN A. GASTRIGHT from September 20-21, 2007.

¶2. We understand that no assistance is needed from post.
After-hours emergency number for the Embassy is (66-2)
205-4108.

¶3. Due to limited resources and easy availability of airport
transportation, post policy does not allow for airport meet
and assist. Thai Airways Limousine Service and American
Express Airport Taxi are recommended for persons unfamiliar
with Bangkok; these services are located on the 2nd floor of
Suvarnabhumi Airport (<http://www.bangkokairportonline.com>)
for arriving passengers and the cost of a one-way trip varies
from 700 to 1,500 Baht, depending on the type of vehicle,
with an additional 70 Baht for highway tolls. The new
airport currently has limited facilities for regular taxis in
the main terminal (located on the ground floor) and if no
taxis are available there, arriving passengers will have to
board an airport shuttle bus from the main terminal to a
nearby taxi and bus terminal. Regular taxis cost
approximately 250 Baht, not including tolls, and an airport
taxi surcharge of 50 Baht. Currently, the Thai Baht is
approximately 34.50/dollar.

¶4. Although visas are not required of holders of U.S.
passports (whether diplomatic, official or tourist) who plan
to stay fewer than 30 days, post nonetheless recommends that
TDY travelers obtain an official visa before coming to
Thailand. It is extremely difficult to extend the 30-day
entry permit granted without a visa at the airport, and fines
for overstays are costly.

¶5. Temporary memberships to Bangkok's Commissary (Emporium)
may be granted to U.S. Government personnel traveling through
Thailand on TDY orders. TDYers who wish to shop in the
Commissary MUST present his/her official or Diplomatic U.S.
passport to the Commissary Office along with a copy of this
Country Clearance telegram or Official Orders to gain access.

Membership fees will not be charged to visitors with less
than 30 days scheduled in-country, however, the Commissary
charges membership fees US \$3.00 per month) for those on TDY
status in country for more than 30 days.

¶6. SECURITY INFORMATION

¶A. MANDATORY PERSONAL SECURITY TRAINING:

-- All U.S. citizen personnel serving under Chief of Mission
authority in a temporary duty status of 30 days or more must

complete appropriate overseas personal security training prior to travel (04 State 66580). Employees who have completed the Security Overseas Seminar course at State's Foreign Service Institute (FSI) after June 1, 2000 meet this requirement. All other TDYers must either, 1) complete the approved four-day seminar at FSI entitled "Serving Abroad for Families & Employees (SAFE)" or 2) have their agency certify to the State Department Bureau of Diplomatic Security that the employee has undergone equivalent security training. The contact for this certification is Assistant Director of Training, DS/T, at telephone (703) 205-2617. Country clearance will not be granted for any traveler with planned TDY in excess of 30 days if this information is not stated/certified. POC for additional information is DS RSOBangkok@state.gov.

1B. CRIME:

-- Crime is generally non-confrontational in nature. Criminal acts are usually crimes of opportunity such as purse-snatchings, thefts of unattended property, and pick pocketing. Visitors should be especially alert in crowded buses, streets, and markets or while on "tuk-tuks." Visitors should lock valuables in hotel safe deposit boxes not in their hotel rooms.

-- Be aware of common scams and frauds (including credit cards, in particular). Visitors should only use credit cards at well-established and reputable businesses. Visitors should be careful when purchasing branded or copyrighted goods. There are many pirated counterfeit products in the marketplace; their purchase is against post regulations and it is illegal to import these products into the U.S. Be wary of common scams for jewelry, suits, silks, gems, or antiquities. There are no Thai government-owned or sponsored gem stores. If victimized, seek assistance from Tourist

Police by dialing 1155.

-- Visitors are cautioned from visiting bars involved in the sex trade. Many of these operate illegally and clients can be subject to RTG law; they often charge exorbitant drink prices and cover charges. There are also many incidents of crime against patrons in these establishments. Drugging and robbing of unwary individuals is not uncommon. There are sporadic reports of victims being drugged and robbed or beaten when visiting these bars. The drugs used can cause serious temporary memory impairment, unconsciousness, and if overdosed, death.

1C. TRAFFIC:

-- The traffic situation in Bangkok can be difficult and dangerous for both pedestrians and vehicle occupants. All visitors should be alert to traffic patterns and unexpected motorcycle drivers. Traffic drives on the left-hand side, opposite from the U.S., although there may be a bus lane that flows in the opposite direction. Pedestrians should use the overhead walkways for crossing busy streets.

1D. TERRORISM:

-- The threat from transnational terrorist groups to the U.S. Mission in Bangkok is currently ranked medium. Despite stepped up RTG efforts to monitor its borders, they remain relatively porous and allow easy illegal access. Transnational terrorist groups, including Al-Qa'ida and Jemaah Islamiyah (JI), have utilized Thailand as a transit point.

-- The threat from indigenous terrorist groups is currently

rated as low. There is no evidence to indicate that indigenous terrorist groups are planning acts against U.S. personnel or facilities. The far south of Thailand has experienced incidents of criminally and politically motivated violence, including incidents attributed to armed local Muslim separatist groups. Although Americans have not been specifically targeted in the past, the indiscriminate nature of past attacks by these groups -- including bombings of public places -- indicates a potential threat to American citizens.

-- The State Department is concerned that there is an increased risk of terrorism in Southeast Asia, including Thailand. Travelers to Thailand should therefore exercise caution, especially in locations where Westerners congregate, such as clubs, discos, bars, restaurants, hotels, tourist areas, and other places frequented by foreigners.

E. OTHER SECURITY TIPS:

-- Visitors should avoid making any pejorative comments about any members of the Thai Royal Family or engaging in disrespectful conduct within temples or toward religious objects. Such behavior can result in arrest and/or expulsion from Thailand.

-- Precautions should also be taken not to discuss sensitive or classified matters outside secure environments or over unsecured and/or cellular telephones, and to securely safeguard classified or sensitive materials at the Chancery and not at hotels or residences.

-- Visitors should also review the State Department's Consular Information Sheet for Thailand and the most recent Worldwide Caution Public Announcements, which are available via the Internet at <http://travel.state.gov>. DOD personnel must review the PACOM Force Protection Levels for Thailand found at <http://131.84.1.218/staff/at/athome.shtml>.

-- In essence, visitors to Bangkok must exercise appropriate caution and be alert to their surroundings with regard to their personal security. Suspicious incidents/activities should be reported to RSO Bangkok (tel. 02-205-4000, 24 hrs/day). On behalf of US Embassy Bangkok, we hope you have a safe and pleasant visit.

BOYCE